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Security Council

Sixty-first year

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5570th meeting

Wednesday, 22 November 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan

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06-62669 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhádi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting the Council will hear a briefing by His Excellency Mr. Kenzo Oshima, Permanent Representative of Japan and Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

I would like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and the Secretariat who took part in the mission to Afghanistan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Oshima, Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): I am very pleased this morning to present an oral report to the Council on the mission of Council members to Afghanistan last week. The Security Council mission, comprising 10 members, visited Afghanistan from 11 to 16 November. Based in Kabul, the mission travelled to provincial cities — Qalat, near Kandahar, in the south, and Mazar-e-Sharif in the north. The planned visit to Kandahar city itself, for a meeting with the governor of that province, had to be cancelled due to the prevailing security situation. On its way out, the mission made a stop in Islamabad for a meeting with senior Pakistani Government officials.

In terms of its movement inside the country, owing to security concerns and other logistical constraints, members of the mission travelled in military transport planes and, in some cases, military helicopters under heavy protection, courtesy of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) command and contributing countries. On behalf of the mission, I wish to express our utmost appreciation to the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, ISAF and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their support, assistance and hospitality during the visit.

In Afghanistan, the mission held extensive discussions with President Karzai, Foreign Minister Spantá and other key ministers, the newly appointed Attorney General, elected parliamentarians and provincial governors and other local leaders and elders. We also met with representatives of UNAMA, United Nations agencies, ISAF, the development community, the diplomatic community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society representatives. In those meetings and in encounters with the media, the Council mission sought to convey to the Afghan and other interlocutors a message consisting of the following points, among others.

The first was to reaffirm that the Council will make utmost efforts to ensure that the international community will continue to support the Afghan Government in its efforts to attain the stability and reconstruction of the country, which is a long-term process and for which sustained commitment will be required.

The second was to emphasize that the Council highly appreciates the Afghan Government's ownership in the successful political transition achieved under the Bonn process that led, eventually, to the Afghanistan Compact, and that it encourages the Afghan Government to transform its ownership into further action for steady implementation of the Compact.

The third was to emphasize that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the multiple challenges facing Afghanistan, including the deteriorating security situation, corruption, human rights, rule of law, transitional justice and drug trafficking and cultivation,

so as to meet the legitimate expectations and aspirations of the population.

The fourth point was to affirm the central and impartial role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including coordination of efforts in implementing the Afghanistan Compact.

The fifth was to encourage the fostering of mutual trust and the promotion of bilateral and regional cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the Governments of neighbouring and other regional partners, in particular the Government of Pakistan, as a matter of crucial importance in addressing those challenges facing Afghanistan and its neighbours in the region.

A full mission report is now being prepared and will be submitted to the Council after consultation with Council members. Following the practice, it will then be circulated to all Member States as a United Nations document in time for a public meeting on the matter, tentatively scheduled for 6 December. Today, as the Head of the mission, I wish to present my views and impressions on some of the important issues.

I shall begin with an overall assessment. This Security Council mission to Afghanistan was the first in three years, the last one having been in 2003. The Afghan partnership that began in Bonn in late 2001 and that continued through the Tokyo reconstruction conference in January 2002 and the January 2006 London Conference is largely on track. The consolidation of gains over this period in establishing and ensuring functioning democratic institutions and the efforts to improve the welfare of the population are moving forward, despite the inevitable fragilities and challenges that are clear to the country's leaders and outside partners.

Over the course of 2006, however — and this is a worrying development — the rise in the Taliban-led insurgency and other social ills including the upsurge in illegal drug production and trafficking, against the backdrop of still too weak and fragile State and provincial institutions, most notably in the public security sector and in the rule of law, and the accompanying endemic corruption and impunity — both real and perceived — have marred the post-Bonn phase and appear to have given rise to widespread despondency and disillusionment among the people. In other words, the confidence of the Afghan public in the institutions and processes appears to have been shaken of somewhat compromised, giving rise to a certain sense of backsliding. The increasing insecurity in parts of the country, particularly in the south and south-east, is worryingly affecting rehabilitation and reconstruction work done by the Afghans and by the United Nations and other international partners.

In the circumstances, it is important to stress two cardinal points: that the commitment of the international community for support of Afghanistan remains firm and sustained; and that the Afghanistan Compact, owned and led by Afghans, is and will remain the best strategic framework for cooperation between the Afghan Government and the international community, and that its steady and faithful implementation therefore needs to continue to be ensured.

Overall security is the major, number-one issue of concern in Afghanistan. After an upsurge in the number of security-related incidents in the country up to the summer of this year, there are, however, some signs that insurgent and terrorist-related violence, which plagued much of the year, may have begun to subside somewhat.

We were briefed by ISAF and told that armed clashes between insurgents and the Afghan and international military forces decreased in October and November. The insurgency is more or less confined to one third of the country, the south, south-east and east — which is still a very large part — while the remaining two thirds of Afghanistan are considered relatively stable. The security situation, however, remains precarious throughout the country, with the threat of suicide attacks and other forms of terrorism by the Taliban and other armed insurgencies and armed groups posing a serious threat to the nation-building process.

The insurgency and acts of terrorism must be dealt with, where necessary, through robust military and law enforcement measures. In this regard, I wish to commend the efforts undertaken by the Afghanistan Government, ISAF and the coalition forces, despite the casualties being inflicted on them. ISAF's expansion throughout the entire country now and its assumption of the leading international role in the provision of security, in the absence of reliable and strong Afghan national military and police forces, should be welcome. At the same time, it is important that the Afghan Government, ISAF and the coalition forces observe

international humanitarian law, avoid civilian casualties and respect local culture and traditions.

Measures must also be taken to address the growing frustration among ordinary Afghans. President Karzai has stated — and other Afghan interlocutors have echoed this view — that the Afghan Government's failure to show its capability to provide security, as well as other economic and social services, in the countryside, have increased disillusionment and contributed in part to the surge in violence. The lack of a capable police force and the widespread corruption in the ranks of State and provincial institutions are of particular concern in this regard, according to many of our interlocutors.

The President also conceded that the continued influence and tolerance of the activities of warlords had also contributed to the loss of faith by the Afghan people.

All interlocutors pointed out the seriousness of the narcotics issue, which, according to President Karzai, is a direct result of the desperation of the Afghan people. It is necessary to address all these issues as a matter of the highest priority. The Afghanistan Government, with the backing of the international community, should take immediate and effective steps, with a view to re-establishing trust among the people.

My third point is that of reconstruction work. As President Karzai put it, Afghanistan had to start on its reconstruction, not merely from zero but from below it, with deep minuses due to years of conflict and the damage sustained by the country. Against this background, the efforts and achievements made so far by the Afghan Government and people are to be highly commended.

In facing the mounting challenges, as we have noted, the Afghanistan Compact remains the best framework for cooperation and promise. It is essential to maintain the principle that Afghans keep their part of the commitment in the Compact in fighting corruption, establishing the rule of law and building a culture of respect for human rights, especially women's rights. They must be encouraged to own the process and take responsibility at this critical stage of consolidating peace after years of war and misery in their recent history.

At the same time, it is abundantly clear that Afghanistan needs additional and sustained support and assistance from the international community, both for quick gains and for sustained progress over the long term. That is the other side of the Compact pledge, and without such support there is no guarantee that Afghanistan, with all the vast investment made by the international community — that is, the price paid, including in terms of human lives — will not slide back into conflict and become a failed State again.

In this context, the Afghan Compact implementation mechanism, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), is expected to play a key part. The mission members attended the third meeting of the JCMB, in which the first mid-term review report was presented and discussed. We agree with the views expressed by many participants in the meeting that the Afghanistan Compact should now move to serious action and consistent implementation efforts through the overall political guidance of the JCMB.

The next aspect I wish to mention is that of human rights. Members of the Human Rights Commission and non-governmental organizations raised concern over the negative impact of the deterioration of the security situation on human rights conditions, including in particular those of women. The Afghanistan Government, as well as the international community, must sharpen the focus on human rights.

As regards the issue of a regional approach, it is clear that the solution to the Afghan problems requires a focus on the regional dimension of the problems, whether in the security sector or elsewhere. The Second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, just held in New Delhi following on our mission to Kabul — although it falls outside the Council's immediate mandate — is timely and of particular importance. Our hope is that this meeting and other similar initiatives will further strengthen regional cooperation for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The regional approach is particularly important from the security perspective. Fostering trust and cooperation between the Afghan Government and its neighbouring partners is highly relevant and of critical importance for peace and security in the region, as our many Afghan interlocutors repeatedly pointed out. While the issues involved here are complex and sensitive, we felt reassured by the comments of

President Karzai and Foreign Secretary Khan of Pakistan. The President stressed that Afghanistan wants optimal relations with Pakistan, while Foreign Secretary Khan repeated that Pakistan wants stability in Afghanistan.

This cross-border relationship needs close monitoring in following the developments in the Afghanistan situation. We were encouraged by both sides' willingness to work together for the holding of cross-border jirgas, as agreed by the Presidents of the three countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States.

We reaffirmed the importance of the role of UNAMA, especially in coordinating the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. I believe that UNAMA's coordination role should be further strengthened with a view to accelerating the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. In this context, we give our full support to the ongoing expansion of UNAMA into the provinces.

We pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Tom Koenigs, his UNAMA staff and other personnel who work on the ground daily, in the very difficult, insecure and highly stressful environment that is Afghanistan today. We thank them for their dedication. I wish to commend their tireless efforts and commitment to their mission.

Finally, I wish to express my own appreciation to all members of the mission for the cooperation extended to me personally and for their input in the course of our discussions with the Afghan interlocutors and others. I am particularly grateful for their patience during the travails of the mission, not least of which was travelling in military helicopters and aircraft wearing heavy flak jackets and helmets all throughout. I also thank them for their good company during the mission.

That was my short oral briefing. As I have indicated, we will prepare a report to the Council, with a certain number of recommendations for a full discussion early in December.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Oshima for his informative briefing.

On behalf of the Council, I should like to express gratitude and appreciation to all of the members of the Security Council mission, which was so ably led by Ambassador Oshima, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The next meeting, to discuss the written report of the mission, will be fixed in consultations with the members of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.